

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 MCE-00 ABF-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00
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O 271019Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2523
INFO SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE
USCINCLANT IMMEDIATE
CINCUSNAVEUR IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 2343

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS MPOL NL
SUBJECT: DOUBTS ABOUT DUTCH ACQUISITION OF LOCKHEED ORION

REF: (A) THE HAGUE 2255 (DTG 241203Z APR 78), (B) THE
HAGUE 2085 (DTG 131421Z APR 78)

1. DEFENSE STATE SECRETARY VAN EEKELLEN'S VISIT TO PARIS
APRIL 26 (REF A) IS RECEIVING TOP BILLING IN RADIO AND
PRESS THIS MORNING. THRUST OF THE REPORTS IS THAT DEFENSE
MINISTER BOURGES GAVE FIRM ASSURANCES THAT THE FRENCH NAVY
WOULD ACQUIRE AT LEAST 42 BREQUET AIRCRAFT OF THE NEW TYPE,
WITH DUTCH FOKKER FIRM PARTICIPATING IN CO-PRODUCTION.
KEY ISSUE IN THE DISCUSSIONS, ACCORDING TO PRESS, WAS
NECESSITY FOR GON TO OBTAIN AT LEAST FOUR OLD FRENCH BREGUETS
ON LOAN UNTIL NEW AIRCRAFT ARE AVAILABLE AROUND 1985. GOF
WILL COME IN WITH FIRM OFFER WITHIN A MONTH AND GON WILL HOLD
OFF DECISION UNTIL THEN.

2. NOW THAT THE GON HAS DECIDED TO ACQUIRE NEW ASW AIRCRAFT,
QUESTION IS FROM WHOM THEY WILL BE PURCHASED. CONSENSUS HERE
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IS THAT NIMROD IS OUT OF THE RUN. THE CHOICE IS FRENCH (THE
NEW BREGUET--NOW ONLY ON THE DRAWING BOARDS AND NOT AVAILABLE
UNTIL AROUND 1985) OR AMERICAN (LOCKHEED ORION P-3C).
AS WE HAVE REPORTED, THE ISSUE HAS BEEN WIDENED NOT ONLY
BY CONSIDERATIONS OF DEFENSE EFFECTIVENESS, AVAILABILITY
AND PRICE (ARGUMENTS STRONGLY PRESSED BY DUTCH NAVY) BUT ALSO
OFFSET, EMPLOYMENT AND, EVEN MORE GENERALLY, THE FUTURE OF THE

DUTCH FOKKER CONCERN AND THE EUROPEAN AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY.

3. LAST WEEK'S PARLIAMENTARY HEARING (REF A) HAD THE EFFECT OF HEIGHTENING POLITICAL INTEREST IN THE REPLACEMENT OF ASW'S. AT THE HEARING, LOCKHEED REPRESENTATIVES HAD OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT THEIR CASE. EMBASSY, HOWEVER, IS INCREASINGLY SUBJECT TO PRESS AND OTHER QUERIES ABOUT US POSITION, INCLUDING POSSIBLE EXTENSION OF LOA (PRESS REPORTS HERE HAVE ALREADY INDICATED THAT LOA HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO AUGUST 1) AND POSSIBILITIES FOR MORE FAVORABLE OFFSET, A POINT ALSO MADE STRONGLY BY DUTCH CNO ADM VELDKAMP TO POL COUNS APRIL 12 (REF B). FRENCH EMBASSY IS LOBBYING HEAVILY.

4. IN ORDER TO DEAL WITH THESE QUERIES AND TO MAXIMIZE OUR LEVERAGE, WOULD APPRECIATE URGENT GUIDANCE. SPECIFICALLY, WE ARE AT THIS JUNCTURE UNSURE WHETHER WE WHOULD PRESS OUR GON CONTACTS TO BUY AMERICAN OR WHETHER, ALSO IN VIEW OF RELATIVELY SMALL SIZE OF THE PURCHASE (13 AIRCRAFT), WASHINGTON PREFERS, IN THE GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE TWO-WAY STREET, FOR THE DUTCH TO BUY EUROPEANIN THIS CASE.

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